Childbirth Accommodation Policy
Graduate Studies
Information for Program Directors

The information in this sheet is meant to augment the communication between a student and their mentor. Strong and clear communication between the mentor and the student is the ultimate goal of this policy. This policy sets a minimum standard of accommodation for a student. The student, advisor and program are expected to work together with great creativity to provide a supportive environment for the student. The birth, adoption, or fostering of a child is an obvious life-changing event. Prior to birth the mother will experience changes in energy levels and productivity throughout pregnancy. After birth, adoption, or fostering a child, both parents will experience changes in sleep; and time management. Advisors will need to have realistic expectations in regards to research productivity both prior to and after the addition of a new child. The new parents need to establish new communications with their advisors to ensure that their projects are progressing at an acceptable rate. They must realize that they cannot hold up research progress. Increased communication between advisor and student may include changes in the ‘ownership’ of particular research projects. This is one example to show how communication between the student and mentor must be open and clear.

The first thing to do when you find out that the student is expecting, planning to adopt, or planning to become a foster parent, is to let the student know that they have a place to go for support and advice. This is a major life event, and the student must know that we will support them. Depending on the situation, you may need to refer the student to counseling for additional support. As you communicate with the student and mentor your role is to facilitate a strong communication between the mentor and student.

Financial Support

Does the student currently receive a stipend?

If a student is not currently receiving a stipend then they will not be eligible for funding from the Graduate Studies Childbirth Accommodation Fund.

If yes, please contact the office of Graduate Studies for detailed information in regards to the forms that need to be filled out.

The main information to give to the student is that their stipend will continue for a six-week period.
If the student is currently supported by a GTA then no changes need to be made. The GTA will continue through the 6-week period.

If the student is currently supported by a GRA then the current source of support will cover the student for the first two weeks, and Graduate Studies Childbirth Accommodation Funds will be used to cover the student for the remaining 4 weeks.

If the student is currently supported by an outside funding agency then we will need to contact the agency to determine if their policy will allow the continued funding of the student for the six week period. If the funding is not allowed, then the student stipend will be funded from the Graduate Studies Childbirth Accommodation Funds.

**Academic Program**

This is not a Leave of Absence policy. The student must be informed that this is a policy that is to be utilized to allow the student to maintain full time status. The student must make every effort to minimize the impact on his or her academic progress. If events dictate, the student may be advised to take a formal Leave of Absence. The Leave of Absence can be utilized in situations where additional time is needed due to complications or other unforeseen circumstances. In some cases a Leave of Absence for a semester or year may be the best solution.

The goal of this policy is to maintain the student on full time status and minimize the disruption to his or her academic progress. The timing and extent of academic changes will vary greatly from student to student. It is impossible to delineate every possible permutation. The following are the best practices for determining an equitable solution that minimizes the academic disruption for the student:

**Course work:** If the student is enrolled in a didactic course then you should discuss with the course director the impact of the childbirth, adoption or fostering on the course. For example, lectures can be videotaped for the student. The student can receive an incomplete until the coursework that was missed is covered, and any required materials submitted, or exams taken. The work needed to finish the course, and receive a grade for the incomplete must be done within one calendar year.

**Comprehensive exams:** The student should do everything possible to remain on schedule in regards to the comprehensive exam. The student is expected to maintain academic inquisition even during the time that they are on the Childbirth Accommodation period. The program should be flexible in scheduling and enforcing the dates for the comprehensive exam.

**Seminar courses:** Courses that require student participation and presentations will require extra consideration. It may be impossible to alter the schedule so that the student can meet expectations. In this case the program and student may decide
that withdrawal from the course, and taking it at a later date is the best course of action.

**Appeals**

In some circumstances the student, mentor or program will not be able to determine a solution that is agreeable to all. In this case, any of the entities can petition for an appeal. The Dean of the appropriate School for the program will hear the Appeal. The appeal shall be submitted in writing to the Dean. The appeal shall state what accommodation is proposed, and what the appealing party is requesting. The appeal will be distributed to all parties; student, mentor and program for their input. The Dean may rule based on the paper arguments, or may request a meeting with the parties to discuss the appeal. The decision of the Dean will be final.